

AN
Earnest Persuasive
TO THE
Serious Observance
OF THE
LORD'S DAY.

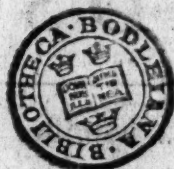
By a Minister of the
CHURCH of ENGLAND.

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A N

Earnest Persuasive

T O T H E

Serious Observance

O F T H E

L O R D ' S D A Y .

 T must be granted, that such as would be saved, must be very diligent and earnest in the Use of the Means of Salvation: And for this Reason, that they must be very careful to make the best Use of the *Lord's Day*, which is a peculiar Season for their spiritual Edification. As God has liberally indulged us with *six* Days for the Discharge of

our worldly Affairs, so has he reserved the *seventh* to himself, and commanded us therein to cease from our worldly Labours and common Diversions, that we may the more entirely wait upon Him, and advance our spiritual and eternal Interests. And the very Nature of the Thing shews us how reasonable it is, that we, who must live for ever in another World, should set apart a due Portion of our Time to prepare for it.

So that on this *holy Day*, we ought, as much as we can, to avoid unnecessary Company, that we may enjoy a more full Communion with God, and prosecute the Business of our Holy Calling with less Distraction. And whoever does so, will find unspeakable Advantages in it, to his great Comfort in Life and Death: God Almighty having declared, He will bestow his peculiar Favours on them that duly observe it.

And what true Lover of his own Soul can be wanting in laying hold on so blessed an Opportunity of obtaining Favour with Almighty God, and receiving the Riches of his Grace and Mercy in Jesus Christ?

Christ? Especially considering, that we know not how few of these Days of Salvation may be granted to us, and how dreadful it is to die in the Neglect or Profanation of them.

And let none imagine, that this was a Commandment to the *Jews* only, and does not reach to us Christians; on the contrary, we find in the *New Testament*, that our Lord keeps up a Title to a seventh Day still, which is called the *Lord's Day*, Rev. i. 10. (because our blessed Lord rose on that Day; which has ever since been particularly dedicated to the Remembrance of his Resurrection.) And we find it observed by the Apostles, as a Day of Assembling for the public Worship of God, and Ministration of the Word and Sacraments, *Acts* xx. 7. As also for a public Collection for the poorer Saints, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. And we read, that our blessed Saviour appeared to his Disciples several Times, and blessed them on this his Day, *John* xx. 19, 26. And he sent his holy Spirit upon them on this Day, *Acts* ii. 4. And since the blessings derived to us by the Resurrection of our blessed Saviour (which we Christians on this Day Com-

memorate) do wonderfully exceed the Works of Creation common to us with the *Jews*, or the Deliverance from *Egyptian* Bondage peculiar to them, we cannot without gross Absurdity and Ingratitude think, that the moral Obligation of it is ceased. To be of this Opinion, is to oppose the Common Sense of Mankind, and the established Orders of our Governors in Church and State: And all Christians have as much Reason to rise up and oppose such as would level this holy Day of God with other common Days, as they would those who are digging down the Sea-Banks; for by Mens breaking in upon the Limits of this sacred Day (instituted for the keeping up a Sense of Virtue and Religion in the World, a whole Tide of Vice and Profaneness will flow in upon us, to the Dishonour of God, the Contempt of Religion, and the pulling down of Plagues and Calamities upon us; which all Men are concerned to do their utmost to prevent. And we see by the Confession of Notorious Offenders, who are brought to suffer the Reward of their evil Deeds, that a chief Cause of their Dissoluteness and Ruin, has been owing to their Disregard of the Lord's Day.

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As our good God therefore has separated this blessed Day to his peculiar Service, for his own Glory, and the Good of Men, both in this World and the next; let us not disappoint these gracious Ends, by Indolence, worldly Business, or sinful Diversions. Let no common Thing keep us from the public Worship of God, either in the Fore or Afternoon; and let as much of the rest of the Day as we can, be spent in the Devotions of the Closet and Family; in Catechising of our Children and Servants, in Repeating what we heard, in Reading good Books, in Prayer, Singing of Psalms, and in good Discourse. And if these sweet and blessed Exercises are tedious and irksome to us, it is enough to affright us to think, how unfit we are for Heaven, where the Love and Praises of God make a great Part of the glorious Entertainment; of which the due keeping of a Christian Sabbath is the happiest Resemblance that we have upon Earth.

But here, alas! too many amongst us grow uneasy at these holy Restraints; and being unaccustomed to deny themselves

selves any thing that their corrupt Hearts desire on other Days, they know not how to restrain themselves on this : And having no inward Relish of Religion, they are soon weary of it, and long to run after their usual Recreations. But surely, such Diversions, as Gaming, Foot-Ball-playing, Dancing, Loitering in Public Houses, and the like, are not allowable on this Day ; having so great a Tendency to take off that Seriousness and Sense of Piety, which it is the Design of this Day's Institution to promote.

For, Sirs, whether you will believe it or not, God has *blessed and sanctified* this Day ; that is, He has separated it to his own peculiar Service, from all our worldly Affairs and Business. But we must not for that Reason set it apart for Sloth, nor yet for Pleasure and Diversion, much less for Sin, to pamper the Body, and to indulge the Lusts thereof, and the Vanities of this World : For we have not only renounced these in the sacred Covenant of Baptism, but this Day is likewise principally set apart for the Worship and Honour of God, and the spiritual Improvement of our Souls, and Preparation for Heaven.

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And to lose the blessed Opportunity of this in public or private, for either worldly or sinful Ends, is a base mis-spending of our Talent, a manifest Contempt of God and his Authority, and a pernicious Neglect of our Salvation ; and such Persons as will not be convinced of this now, will be taught it in a very terrible Manner hereafter. And surely, they cannot be accounted other than the Enemies of God, and of their own Souls too, who reject the Blessing of the Lord's Day, by using it to a quite contrary End and Design. Our Church has thought the Observation of the Lord's Day to be of such great Importance, that after the Rehearsal of the Fourth Commandment, we are required to implore Forgiveness of God, for all that we have done contrary to this holy Law of his ; and to pray, that He would give us his Grace that we may never commit any such grievous Sins any more, in these Words : *Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our Hearts to keep this Law.*

And forasmuch as our supreme Law-giver has in this Law of his required that such as have *Strangers within their Gates*, that is, Guests or Lodgers, do look to it, that

that those under their Roof do not profane this sacred Day : How greatly are those who keep Taverns and Public Houses concerned, to keep their Houses clear of Company on this Day ? since they and their Servants must thereby be prevented from attending on the public Worship of God, and are in great Danger of losing all serious Sense of their Duty to God, their Neighbour, or themselves. Besides, we must answer to God for any Profanation of the Lord's Day, discernable and preventable by us, that was committed by those under our Authority, in our Houses, wherein, as Governors, we ought to bear Rule to the Glory of God.

And therefore, however many Masters of Public Houses flatter themselves with the Gains they make by following their Trades, and humouring their Customers on this reserved Day of our Lord, they will find a very sad Reckoning at last, before the Judge of all the Earth. When it will be made appear, that they have supplied many Persons with Instruments to fight against God, in that they suffered them to sit drinking and revelling in their Houses, whilst they ought to have been

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at the public Worship of God, or to have been employed in the pious Government of their own Families. And whatever Friendship there now seems to be, between such as live in those pernicious Vices, and such as administer Fuel to them, it may at last break out into an eternal Enmity and Aversion in the other World; where the one may say, "Had you not admitted me into your House, and supplied me with Wine and other Things, which were not Matter of Necessity, but mere Vanity and Impiety, I might have kept the Lord's Day better, and have escaped this Place of Torment." And on the other Hand, the other Party may reply, "Had you not frequented my House on the Lord's Day, and prevented me and my Servants from serving God in his House and my own, we might likewise have been more happy."

That such Expostulations and Upbraidings will be like to be in the other World, (where every one will see the Baseness and Perniciousness of sinning against God) is very probable from what we see in Persons

sons whose Eyes God pleases to open here on Earth.

I knew a Gentleman, who, after a sharp Sickneſs betaking himſelf to a new Life, ſent for the Maſter of the Tavern, where he had miſ-ſpent much Time, and many Lord's Days, and with ſuch a Countenance as made him even tremble, checked him ſeverely for allowing Company to fit drinking on the Lord's Day, or upon any other Day to Exceſs; and gave him ſuch an affecting Charge to amend this for the future, as ſtartled him whenever he called it to Mind; as the Perſon to whom he ſpoke afterwards confeſſed.

1. Say not then, What harm is there in drawing Drink to ſuch Perſons as require it on the Lord's Day? Since if it be unneceſſary, it cannot but be very ſinful; becauſe, at beſt, it makes both them and you miſ-ſpend the Lord's Day; and many Times occasions very heinous Diſorders and Tranſgreſſions on it.

2. Say not, You ſhall loſe your Trade, and fail of a Livelihood, by obſerving this Part of your Duty; but remember,
that

that God rained down a double Portion of Manna on the Day before the Sabbath, for the Use of those that observed it, *Exodus* xvi. 29. And be assured, that you cannot lose by your faithful Service to so good a Master.

3. Say not, Others do it, and I will not be singular: since the Law of God, and not the Practice of others, must be our Rule, if we desire God's Kingdom.

Lastly, Say not, That if it be a Sin, you must answer for it yourself, and that no Body else is concerned in it. No, all public Sins are public Offences and Scandals; that is, they occasion others to fall into Sin, are the common Reproach of Christianity, and the Causes of public Calamities. Upon which Account therefore, it were to be wished, that all would oppose the Profanation of the Lord's Day by all lawful and adviseable Means; as that which tends directly to the Dishonour of God, the Decay of Religion, and to the Destruction of the public Good.

We are all ready enough to lay Hands on such as break any Law which concerns ourselves.

ourselves. If any one steals, or robs us of any little Matter, we alarm the Neighbourhood, and raise all the Power we can to apprehend the Thief, and are at Charge to prosecute and punish him according to Law: And without Doubt, we do well in it; for the tolerating such Offenders is Injustice to the Public, and a Cruelty to the Innocent. But then, why are we so slack, and so unwilling to vindicate, by prudent and proper Means, the Honour of God, against such as profane his holy Day and Name? Are these light Matters? Has not God a Right and Title in his own Day? Or rather; Is not the true Reason, Because we are not so sensible of Offences against God as against ourselves? But this is a very bad State, and a sure Sign, that we have not that Love and Zeal for God, which every true Christian ought to have. Let us therefore rouse up ourselves to do this Honour to God, or we shall never be honoured by Him.

To sum up all: The Lord's Day is, in its Institution, a Day of Blessing, and of infinite Good to Men: But Men may, by their Idleness or Profaneness, turn
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their Blessings into Curses. But as this is great Folly, so it will end in dismal Sorrow and Anguish, especially when these Days of the Son of Man are over. When Death closes up the Day of Grace and Mercy, and there shall be no more Sabbaths, nor Sacraments, nor Sermons, nor Prayers, for ever : Then will the profane Person wish in vain for the Return of that which he hath irreparably lost by despising it; like *Esau's* begging with Tears (but to no Purpose) for the Blessing which he had sold for a sensual Morsel.

O my Brethren ! Know your Christian Privileges, improve your blessed Sabbaths, and the invaluable Seasons of God's Grace. Our Day of Life and of Grace *is far spent*, and *the Night is at hand*. Let this quicken us in these last Hours of our Day ; to *provide the Things which make for our eternal Peace*, lest they be ere long hidden from our Eyes, and we for ever debarred from their Enjoyment.

F I N I S.

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